

Gods Order in Christ - Part 8

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the critical role of truth and faith in restoring God's heavenly order through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 40:27

Scripture: Genesis 3:1, Psalm 23:4, Matthew 6:33, John 10:27, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:8

Topics: "Order In Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Christian and Hopeful from John Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Christian and Hopeful were initially rejoicing and having fellowship with each other, talking about the Lord and His ways. However, their journey took a turn when they reached Douting Castle, the residence of giant despair. They were captured and thrown into a dungeon because they had strayed from the main road and were trespassing. The speaker emphasizes the importance of faith and the dangers of giving in to doubt and unbelief, as Satan constantly tries to undermine our trust in God.

Transcript

We are much too far advanced in our time and message to do anything very much in the way of retrospect to help those who are just with us, but sufficient to say that we are being occupied at this time with the relationship of the Lord Jesus to God's great heavenly eternal order. Having looked back to that order in its primal beauty and glory and nature, we have seen the disruption and upset and dislocation which were brought in by rebellious powers in heaven who by reason of their rebellion were cast out and then their leader coming into things here with this one object of spoiling the work of God and upsetting that heavenly order which had been introduced into this earth. All the terrible story resultant from a disturbed and upset divine order.

Making that word and its meaning, heavenly order, the key to the Bible. But we are particularly seeing the relationship of the Lord Jesus to that whole business. Why he came into this world.

Why he lived long enough on this earth to show and to manifest the laws of that heavenly order in his own person. And all that was bound up with his union with the Father in his teaching, in his works, and then why he died as he did. All related to the recovery and establishment of the heavenly order in this creation.

No wonder he was marked from his birth for destruction. No wonder the prince of this world having a very ready instrument to hand in heaven sought to curtail that life at its very beginning. No wonder all the way

through his public life there ran that hatred, that malicious hatred.

And it is repeatedly stated they sought to destroy him. He was here to destroy the works of the devil. Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.

And that meant to destroy the destroyer of God's heavenly order. Now we've covered a lot of ground in that connection. Today we have come to the point where we are seeking to put our finger upon some of the things which were the cause of that disruption, used to it, and which had got to be destroyed, firstly in the individual believer.

And remember that it's an open window to a very great deal in our individual Christian life, that that which the Son of God was manifested to do, destroy the works of the devil, begins in the individual believer. That is so far as the practical outworking of it is concerned. And then it has to spread and extend through all relationships, personal relationships and church relationships.

The works of the devil have got to be destroyed. We are seeking to find out what those works are that have to be destroyed. I'm not going to take you again this afternoon to passages which were before us this morning.

I come straight to the truths themselves without the illustrations and symbolisms. This morning we saw that the first blow at that heavenly divine order at the beginning was struck with the weapon of a lie. A lie.

The enemy brought with him a lie about God and about man and about the laws of God. Well, it's all right so far, but when man exposed himself or opened himself to that lie, gave an ear to it, gave attention to it, permitted it to stand, the lie entered into the very constitution of the man and threw the man to the race and threw the race into the whole system of this world. Well, we spent the morning trying to show the devastating effect of untruth and therefore the tremendously vital importance in the reconstruction of a heavenly order of truth.

For it is, let me repeat once more, only in the divine order that the divine end can be reached. No other way. Now this afternoon then we come to the second of these things which on the one side spelt the disruption of this creation and on the other side spelt the recovery and reconstruction.

And that is unbelief and faith. Unbelief and faith. There are so many parts of the scripture to which we could turn at this time in this connection.

May it suffice for the present to remind you that when at last the work is done, the recovery is perfected and all the damage is repaired. The works of the devil have been completely cast out and we have that wonderful symbolic representation of what is heavenly in nature and order. The new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven.

There are some very significant things said there. We have this for one in Revelation 21 and verse 8. But for the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that garners with fire and brimstone. The unbelieving come in the category at last.

It was an original work by which the creation was thrown into such confusion. It is the final work of the triumphant Lamb that sees unbelief in the lake of fire. As I said there are many scriptures that I could quote and to which I could turn you on this matter of unbelief.

You will probably be recalling some, but there is that very significant statement regarding the whole generation of Israel which came out of Egypt. God's thought and will that they should enter upon that which would be a wonderful earthly representation of a heavenly order. It is written over the whole of that generation they could not enter in because of unbelief.

It is the great frustrating thing. The great limiting thing. It is the great spoiling thing.

It disappoints God and man. Well, let us look at this. What is its nature? What is the nature of unbelief? It is nothing less and other than a vicious slandering of God.

Hath God said? Hath God said? You can hear, leer and you can hear something unholy, something that would bring God himself into question. Well, unbelief is all that we can say that is against God. It is disparagement of God.

Hath God said? There is the note of disparagement there. It is the defaming of God. It is calumny against God.

It is libel against God. It is detraction from God. It is casting an aspersion upon God.

It is all that and much more. That is unbelief. Unbelief always calls God into question, always takes something from God of his character, puts something upon God which does not belong to his nature.

It is a terrible thing, is unbelief. We know quite well when we are saying all these things we are hitting ourselves pretty hard. We are not saying this objectively about other people or about you.

We are taking ourselves very severely to task, facing the truth about our own hearts. We know quite well that unbelief or doubt is always weakness and it always has the effect of disintegrating the life. Just shattering its unity, pulling it to pieces, thus it weakens our souls.

It weakens our hands in the work of God or in any purpose. It arrests our progress. Oh how true these things are and how much more can be said truly about this terrible thing, unbelief.

If you were going to buy a newly built house and wanting to be very sure you brought the builder along and you said to him, will the foundation really hold up that house? And he said, I'm not sure. Will that roof really be weatherproof and watertight? I don't know, I have my doubts. Will those floors really sustain the weight that I want to put on them? I don't know.

Well, will the whole thing stay together? I can't tell you. What would you do? Well, I know what you would do. You would say you can have your house.

That's not what I want. But perhaps you would turn to him and say, have you ever thought of a name for your house? Again, he might say, no, I don't know. Well, I'll give you a name for that house.

Doubting Castle. Doubting Castle. And we might just put in there a little parenthesis from our brother John Bunyan.

You remember Doubting Castle? And this might be very appropriate just for today for some of us. For Christian and hopeful had been having a good time by the river. Really enjoying the time on the banks of the river as they walked along.

Quite a good time to have a way of passing. And as they went on they came upon a very rugged piece of road. So different and hard going.

But after a time they began to complain about the road and the hardness of the way. Began to ask questions as to whether this was right, whether this ought to be. Whether the king was really kind in asking them to come along such a road.

While they were so occupied they came to a little by-path in the road. It led off from the main road and it led into By-path Meadow in which was Doubting Castle, the residence of Giant Despair. And because they were trespassing, how clever Bunyan was, they were trespassing.

They were where they ought not to have been. Giant Despair espied them and came out and dragged them in and flung them into a dungeon. And here's another touch of genius.

Bunyan says they had very little to say to each other now because they both knew they were in the wrong. They had been rejoicing together, talking about the Lord and the things of the Lord and having blessed fellowship. Now that was all brought to a stop in Doubting Castle under the shadow of Giant Despair.

There they lay, everything suspended. But after a while Christian recollected. He recollected that he had the key of the castle in his bosom.

And he said, what a fool I am. Thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I can be walking at liberty. I have the key.

When he said that, Giant Despair's limbs began to tremble and to fail him. And his fits already commenced to take hold of him and he was unable to keep them in his dungeon or his castle. Well, that's it.

Unbelief. The ravages of unbelief. It's forbidden ground.

It's a by-path meadow. It's off the main road. You and I have visited that more than once.

We've been caught. But there it is. That's what has happened to man.

And that, let us be honest, has happened to us perhaps more than once. We have allowed this sinister thing to come in, ask questions about the goodness of the Lord, about the love of God, to wonder whether our hard road is after all not a contradiction to his goodness, his mercy. Once we get down that road, we are getting off the track.

Once we let that thing begin to have a place, it will not be long before we are in the grip of Giant Despair. It's like that, dear friends. We know it true.

Well, this world is there. Many Christians get there. All that remains to be said is that faith, belief is a mighty, mighty weapon in the Son of God for destroying the works of the devil.

Now you see, his life here, why did he live here? He did not come into this world with anything whatever to rest upon as a guarantee or assurance of worldly success or, from the natural standpoint, that his mission would be successful. He came in minus everything that this world requires for success. And so he lived.

He had no wealth. He had no worldly influence. He was brought up in a place which itself represented a handicap to his life, a town with a bad reputation.

Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? And so he lived right the way through with everything lacking that this world demands for success and not very much present that was set against him and in a very atmosphere of malice and hatred there. But he lived and went through an earthly life on one thing only, and that was faith in his Father. Faith in his Father.

And who shall say in the light of the record that that faith was not put to it very, very severely at times? It was. It was. Right to the last breath, he was assailed.

He was assailed. If there is any meaning, truth at all in the statement that he was tempted in all points like as we are, sin upon tempted nevertheless, Satan came to him in the wilderness on this very thing. The insinuation of the devil again in the wilderness is, if God were your Father, he wouldn't let you hunger.

He wouldn't let you hunger. That's for certain. But the fact is that under the severest testings of faith, to the end, he won through.

Those two last cries on the cross, my God, why? Why? That's the cry of a tested faith, isn't it? Why hast thou forsaken me? You and I will never have by the goodness and mercy of God to cry that cry, but you and I in so much smaller ways have more than once said to the Lord, why? But then, I am so glad that there was a change from my God, my God, why, to Father into thy hands. I commit my spirit, that's the end. Faith has triumphed back into the realm of absolute confidence in his Father.

There he closes his life. But you see, he was, in his own life and person, recovering and reestablishing this law of a heavenly order. It's brought back by triumphant faith.

It is, in the first place, the assurance of God. The assurance of God. It is the assurance that God is the Savior.

Strong cries and tears that he might be saved, that he might be saved from death. And he was heard in that he feared. Meaning, of course, as that word always does mean in the Bible, not that he was afraid, but that he trusted.

He trusted God for his salvation. The assurance of salvation, that's faith, in God. The assurance of purpose in calling.

Satan tried to destroy that in the wilderness. Get him off to experiment with God and to resort to some other kind of method. Of fulfilling his vocation in capturing the dominion of the kingdoms of this world.

Do it in your own strength. Do it in the popular way. Do it as other men do it.

Don't do it by faith. Do it by works. Do it out from yourself.

Trying to raise a question, if, if, all the time, raise a question as to whether with all that was against him, and all this threat that was confronting him, he could fulfill his mission. He was caught to this work. And faith triumphed in the matter of his calling, his vocation, the purpose of God in his life.

You and I tested along those same lines. As to God and assurance of God. As to salvation.

Many, many a man and woman who has lived a long life in walking with God has had that supreme test before the light closed on the question of assurance of salvation. As a fact, I read through again last week the life of Dr. A. B. Simpson. There was a man who walked with God.

He did. There was a man to whom the Lord taught. He was such.

There was a man who was used of the Lord. He was. Worldwide, a wonderful testimony.

In the closing weeks of his life, he was under the dark, dark cloud, questioning whether he was really saved. Reverend had to gather round him and fight that battling prayer for him. He came out triumphant before he went.

But Satan, you see, never, never gives up this thing. Trying to spoil everything by insinuating unbelief, questions about God. It shatters everything.

Because he knows, the enemy knows, that faith after all involves everything. Just as unbelief involves everything. It's not one of those things that you can isolate, separate.

It involves everything. That is why, through the Apostle, in prescribing the armor against principalities and powers, he puts this in and takes the big shield of faith. That's what it is.

It isn't in our translation, but that's what it is. The big shield. The overall shield.

That's what it is. It isn't in our translation, but that's what it is. The big shield.

The overall shield. You may have all the other pieces of the armor and all the other places where it fits, but you've got to cover everything with faith. Even your righteousness has got to be a righteousness by faith.

Every bit of it. The truth, the girdle of truth, it's of no avail only by faith. See, faith involves everything.

That is why the enemy struck at faith at the beginning and never ceases to strike. And that continue, that conflict will continue to the end. We have related this matter to building.

This is the second pillar of the seven pillars of wisdom with which he is building her house. If the first is truth, the second is faith. It is.

And there'll be no building without faith. There'll be just the opposite. Everything will go to pieces if there is unbelief, if there is doubt.

We know it so well. It is true. So Paul cries, the life that I now live in the flesh.

I live by the faith of the Son of God. Now I am very glad, dear friends, that that's the literal way of putting it and for what that means. Because you and I are so often found helpless and baffled because we feel we haven't got the kind of faith and the measure of faith that is called for.

You know that, I do. And perhaps this afternoon as we speak of it, tremendous thing it is, we feel almost appalled at our little faith. But it's the faith of the Son of God.

He perfected faith in himself. He won the battle of faith completely. And in his cross he met that whole realm of unbelief, that evil thing, and conquered it in his cross as we have seen.

These principalities, powers, hosts of wicked spirits which compassed him about like bees were all concentrating for one final blow of victory to make him doubt his God. It came through, triumphant over them all. And in that way he stripped them off and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross.

Now, we know this is one of almost our platitudes, and yet how slow we are to appropriate. We know that the Holy Spirit came precisely to make good in us and in the church what Jesus did in his cross. That's a part of our doctrine at any rate, isn't it? But that is why the Holy Spirit came, to guide us into all the truth, to take the things of Christ, show them to us, to make real in us all that was true in Christ.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, has come to implant faith, to nurture faith, to strengthen faith, to bring the faith of the Son of God alive in us and to increase in us. Oh, if it's my faith, that's not going to get through. If it's your faith, it's a poor thing.

If it's his faith, it's a mighty faith that has already conquered. It's his faith. I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I, but Christ, that life which I now live in the flesh. I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, gave himself up for me. Faith is the gift of God.

Faith is the work of God. Let us ask the Lord to strengthen the faith of the Son of God in us. As together we are built up, so the building will go on, a structure that proves by its testimony that the works of the devil have been destroyed.

In particular, may it never be that we cannot enter in because of unbelief, but rather of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise.

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